



Frederick Arthur Bussey

205858 Private, 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment

Formerly 265414 Suffolk Regiment

He was killed in action on 25th October 1917 in Flanders, aged 20

Frederick was buried at Hooze Crater Cemetery, Ypres, West Flanders, Belgium

Bertie Frederick Bussey DCM

92995 Corporal, Tank Corps

Bertie survived the war and died on 28th Dec 1971, aged 78

Wilstone, Tring, Hertfordshire

This is the brief story of three young men, brothers, one of whom died in conflict, the two of whom were lucky to return home. The oldest of the three went on to marry the widow of a Harleston hero and raise her children, the youngest brother was in the infantry and died in action, the middle of the three wound up in the Tank Corps.

Let's go back to rural Suffolk in 1861 when the boys' father, the then 6 years old George Bussey was living in Metfield with his parents, a couple of older siblings and a 2 years old younger sister – not that remarkable but not only was his father 50 years old but so was his mother – poor woman had probably spent the last 30 years producing children!

George's father was a Journeyman Carpenter as was one of the older sons so at least a reasonable amount of money was coming into the household. 10 years later and the one remaining older son had also followed in his father's footsteps and was a Journeyman Carpenter, three young lodgers (who worked at the local Brickworks) were also lodging in the house so although there would have been nothing grand, again the family should have been financially secure.

George decided to break away from the family building tradition and 1881 found him amongst the bright lights of Lowestoft, employed as a Railway Porter, lodging with another, more senior, employee of the railways – a Railway Horse Foreman.

With this steady employment, George took himself a wife, marrying Rosa Rayner in late 1881. Although Rosa had been born into an Agricultural Labourer's family out on the Rushall Road in Starston, by 1871 her family had also embraced the railway. Living next to the Railway Tavern in 1871, Rosa's father Thomas was a Coal Porter, almost certainly working in and out of the railyard, Rosa's oldest brother (still at home), George Rayner, was a railway porter whilst in the actual railway yard, living next to the Station master's house, another yet older brother, William Rayner, was also working as a railway porter. In those days trades really did tend to follow in the family. In this 1871 census, Rosa, only 11 years old, was already working as a 'day servant'. The following, 1881, census (shortly before her marriage) had her working for an elderly local bigwig, James Pratt, in the Beeches, near the Magpie.

We do not know exactly how the young couple met, but Rosa and her new husband set up home in Lowestoft, baptising their older sons (George, William and Ernest) out there before returning to Harleston in time to baptise their only daughter, Beatrice, at Redenhall church in 1890. 1891 finds

the family living in Ellis' Yard on the London Road (vaguely opposite the Beeches where Rosa had been working 10 years earlier). At this point George Snr had given up the Railway work and was working as a painter, an occupation he stayed with for the rest of his working life.

With three other children in the house, their oldest son, the then eight years old son, George Jnr, was staying with his maternal grandparents, the Rayners, who had moved to Wilson's Yard at the other end of town, not far from where they had been living in 1871. Farming out of children, particularly to relatives, was a widely practiced way of coping with small houses and large families!

The Bussey family remained on the London Road although they may have moved to one of the now demolished houses near Wilderness Terrace by the 1901 census when Rosa's widowed mother had joined the household. By then, Bertie and Frederick had been added to the now complete family oldest son, George, married local lass Hannah Chilvers in 1904, next son down William, was lodging in Church Street in 1901 and was a domestic servant, rather like Ernest, (the third son) who was still living at home) working as a page boy (junior footman?). William had made it to the giddy heights of being a butler by 1911!

The bulk of the Bussey family were still on the London Road in 1911 and, in a nice reflection of the father's situation 30 years earlier, had a young Railway Porter lodging with them. All six of their children had survived to adult hood, we can see the three youngest still living at home and with decent jobs. The two younger boys, Bertie Frederick and Frederick Arthur were a Tailor and Shop Assistant respectively, whilst their slightly older sister was working in the Hosiery factory in Keeley's Yard that was to make vast amounts of olive socks for the troops in the first world war.

The Bussey's third son, Ernest Bussey, went on to marry, in 1920, Florence Ellen Cook nee Ling, the widow of Pte Frederick James Cook, who died in Flanders in 1918, aged 40. As matter of interest, all other records of Pte Cook give his name as [James Frederick Cook](#)

The Bussey's fourth son, Bertie, had chosen (or had chosen for him) a challenging branch of the forces when he joined the Tank Corps. Early Tanks were first viewed as the answer to trench warfare but it soon became clear that, although they could cross shelled terrain that wheeled vehicle would become bogged down in, they had their own terrifying hazards. According to Wikipedia

Most World War I tanks could travel only at about a walking pace at best. Their steel armour could stop small arms fire and fragments from high-explosive artillery shells. However, they were vulnerable to a direct hit from artillery and mortar shells. The environment inside was extremely unpleasant; as ventilation was inadequate the atmosphere was heavy with poisonous carbon monoxide from the engine and firing the weapons, fuel and oil vapours from the engine and cordite fumes from the weapons. Temperatures inside could reach 50°C (122°F). Entire crews lost consciousness inside the tanks, or collapsed when again exposed to fresh air.^{[6][8]} Crews learned how to create and leave behind supply dumps of fuel, motor oil, and tread grease, and converted obsolete models into supply vehicles for newer ones.^[6]

Young Bertie, in civilian life a tailor, appears to have had not only bravery but a certain mechanical aptitude, a combination of which gained him a well earned Distinguished Conduct Medal

92995 Pte. B.F. Bussey, Tank Corps (Harleston) (LG 15 Nov. 1918).

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack. After his officer and serjeant had become casualties, and he was the only unwounded man in the Tank, he directed it towards the enemy and, locking the steering, he left the Tank to steer itself while he served both guns. This he continued to do for four hours, eventually bringing his Tank safely out of action. He showed a splendid example of determined courage and resource.

1919

No.	Corps	Name
92995	TANK C.	BUSSEY
File.		B. F.
Operations	Vol.	Page
DCM.	LG 15-11-18.	D157-5.
(432) Wt. 2740/2500 250M (Q) F.O.S. S.E.R. Ltd. Cx 447		
File Nos. :-		

THE LATE MRS. R. BUSSEY

The funeral took place at the Parish Church, on Saturday, of Mrs. Rosa Bussey (84), of London Road. She was the widow of Mr. G. Bussey and in former years had been a prominent worker in the Methodist cause.

The Rector (Canon B. M. Pickering) officiated and the family present were Mr. William Bussey, Mr. George Bussey, Mr. and Mrs. E. Bussey, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Musk, Mrs. Gurr and Mrs. Chaplin.

Others present included Mr. H. F. Howard, Miss Page, Mr. and Mrs. S. E. Borrett, Miss Borrett, Mrs. R. Pine, Mrs. J. Pearce, Mrs. C. Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. H. Pearce, Mrs. Goodwin, Mrs. H. Brett, Mrs. F. Talbot, Mrs. C. Snowling.

During the interwar period various Busseys appear in the local Norfolk papers participating in activities associated with the local Methodist chapel – socials, concert parties and various fundraisers

However, Bert somehow met Constance Mapley from Tring, married her and set up home near Tring continuing in his trade as a tailor for J. Ellis and Sons, a business in West Street Tring. The 1921 census shows Bert and Constance to be the proud parents of 1 year old Vera Elizabeth, with a young tailor from Bert's workplace boarding in their home.

Vera appears to have been Bert and Constance's only child, she in turn marries Green Grocer's apprentice Frederick Rance when just 18, a year before the second world war breaks out. The young couple set up home with Vera's parents appearing there in the 1939 register with their son Ian D J Rance.

Basically the Bussey family appear to have been a steady hard working family, reasonably ambitious for their children, doubtless if Frederick Arthur had survived he too would have continued with a quiet and respectable life and been a modest pillar of his local community.

Ps. Important not to confuse this family with that of Clifford Charles Bussey from Gorleston who for many years had a successful grocers in the town.